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SF 501 Introduction to Spiritual Formation

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SF 501 Introduction to Spiritual Formation

Fall, 2002 1:00-2:15 Tu/Tr

Dr. Reg Johnson

I. Course Description: A survey that examines the theological and practical dimensions of the spiritual life. Lectures, class discussions and small-group disciplines are used. Students are encouraged to enrich their own personal spiritual life and are given guidelines for engaging in a ministry of spiritual formation in the local church.

II. Course Objectives:

- A. Participants are expected to acquire knowledge about the...
 - means by which we open our lives to God's love;
 - seasons through which we grow;
 - community in which we live; and
 - approaches to spirituality by which we can be nourished.
- B. Participants are expected to develop skills in...
 - identifying growth points in the spiritual life;
 - discovering their own "inner story";
 - furnishing resources, and
 - designing strategies for intentional spiritual formation in a congregation.
- C. Participants are encouraged to deepen their relationship with Christ by...
 - living in a covenant community;
 - using the means of grace;
 - engaging in formative ("spiritual") reading;
 - keeping a record of their experiences with the Lord in a spiritual journal;
 - exploring additional material on themes or resources dealt with in class;
 - participating in formative discussions in their small groups;
 - appreciating the stories of faith which are part of their classmates' journeys; and
 - continuing to formulate a personal theology for spiritual formation.

III. Texts

- Richard Foster, A Celebration of Discipline
- Reginald Johnson, Your Personality and the Spiritual Life & “Learning to Pray Again” Compact Disc
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together
- Joyce Huggett, Listening to God

Participants will also purchase a class packet at Cokesbury Book store. This material consists of “handouts” and worksheets for use in class.

IV. Class Structure

SF 501 will be structured as a "covenant community". This is an acknowledgment that spiritual formation takes place within the context of the Christian community. Each covenant group shall utilize common disciplines and weekly meetings. In the initial meetings, group members will share from their own spiritual journeys. In the latter meetings they will share from their journal entries of the previous week. Some or all of the following questions of “examen” will guide those meetings.

- How did I meet God in scripture this week?
- How did I meet God in daily life this week? (joys, sorrows, anxieties, celebrations)
- How did I meet God in other people this week? (spiritual gifts, disagreements, etc.)
- How did I close off to God this week? When was I most open?

Each of these group sessions will end in prayer. Depending upon the time available, it may be a period of silent prayer, sometimes one member may be invited to pray for the group as a whole, and at other times there may be time for group “conversational prayer.”

V. Grading System

Grading will be on the basis of a "contract". Participants will decide, in the light of present commitments, which grade will be their goal. Grades are not awarded on the basis of the contract made, but upon the quality of work done at the performance level chosen. For the purpose of assessment, there will be graded elements in the course.

VI. Grade Expectations

For the "C-Level" contract...

- be faithful to the group covenant (25 points)

- read course texts and work through the course CD (25 points)
- write a spiritual autobiography (30 points)
- attend class sessions (2 points deducted for unexcused absences)
- achieve a minimum cumulative total of 70 out of 80 points

For the "B-Level" contract...

- fulfill C-Level expectations
- write two essays (worth 10 points each).
- keep a spiritual journal 4 out of 7 days a week. (30 points) and
- achieve a minimum cumulative total of 115 out of 130 points.

For the "A-Level" contract...

- fulfill C and B-level expectations
- present an approved project to the class (25 points)
- achieve a minimum cumulative total of 140 out of 155 points.

VII. Course Components

Spiritual Autobiography. This 10 - 15 page paper (double-spaced, typed) will relate stories from your life which enable the reader to see the formative experiences which have brought you to this point. The stories are to trace early influences, significant persons, and important "passages" of your life. Not only will you recount the "outer facts" but you will use these pages to also reflect upon their inner meaning as well. Due on September 26.

Essays. These papers will be 3-5 pages in length (double-spaced, typed). In the first you will write about how your personality influences your spirituality, and how your spirituality is impacting your personality. In the second you will choose some course-related theme, issue, idea or person for further research. Footnotes (or endnotes) and bibliography will evidence that you have gone beyond class texts in your exploration. Write cogently and present your material in a concise and well-organized fashion. The first essay is due on Oct. 31. The second essay is due on December 3. Two points will be deducted for each 24 hour period that a paper is late. Allowances will, of course, be made for medical emergencies or personal crises (e.g., death in the family).

Spiritual Journal. Journal entries shall be made 4 out of 7 days a week. They will be kept in a separate notebook and handed in for review on September 26, October 31, December 3.

Creative Project. You may choose an artistic mode (painting, sculpture, poetry, creative writing, photo meditation, original musical composition, etc.) in order to give expression to some aspect of your own spiritual journey. It is expected that the project will be a fresh work. You are to get approval of your idea before proceeding. Or, you may choose a project that communicates course-related ideas (e.g., lesson plans, sermon manuscript, newsletter articles, overhead transparencies, set of retreat talks, etc.). The Project represents a significant course assignment. Those who work at this level are expected to invest *a minimum of ten hours* in the preparation of their project. Some will spend much more time than that. You will record your intention to develop a creative project by the fourth week of class. Projects will be shared in class at the end of the semester.

SF 501 Course Calendar (Tuesday - Thursday) Fall, '02

- 9/3 Getting acquainted, introduction to course, syllabus
- 9/5 Keeping a Spiritual Journal
- 9/10 Writing a Spiritual Autobiography
- 9/12 Forming a Spiritual Formation Group
- 9/17 Theological Foundations: What is Spiritual Formation?
- 9/19 Theological Foundations: Asceticism, Discipline, and Disciplines
- 9/24 Theological Foundations: The Atoning Death
Journals are checked
- 9/26 Theological Foundations: The Indwelling Life
Spiritual Autobiography is due

10/1 Theological Foundations: Life Together

10/3 Learning to Pray: Introduction

10/8 Learning to Pray: Cooperation

10/10 Learning to Pray: Communion

10/15 Learning to Pray: Celebration

10/17 Learning to Pray: Contemplation

10/22 Personality and Spirituality: Gifts

10/24 Personality and Spirituality: Infirmities

10/29 Personality and Spirituality: Nurture
Essay 1 is due and Journals are checked

10/31 Personality and Spirituality: Growth

11/5 Intentional Ministry

11/7 Intentional Ministry

11/ 12 Intentional Ministry

11/14 Intentional Ministry

11/19 Festival of Spiritual Formation
Journals are checked and Essay 2 is due

11/21 Festival of Spiritual Formation

11/26-11/29 Fall Reading Week

12/3 Festival of Spiritual Formation
Journals are checked

12/5 Closure

